UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/C.7/1991/L.3
25 March 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
Twelfth session
25 March-4 April 1991
Agenda item 4*

WATER RESOURCES

Preparation for the International Conference on Water and the Environment

Denmark and Sweden: draft resolution

The Committee on Natural Resources,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 44/228 of 22 December 1989 on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which will be convened in 1992,

Noting with appreciation that the World Meteorological Organization, on behalf of the organizations of the United Nations system with programmes in fresh water that are represented on the Administrative Committee on Coordination Inter-Secretariat Group for Water Resources, will convene an International Conference on Water and the Environment in January 1992 as part of the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and the kind offer of the Government of Ireland to host that Conference, hereinafter called the Dublin Conference,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 45/181 of 21 December 1990, and in this connection stressing the relevance for the Dublin Conference of the New Delhi Statement, adopted at the Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation for the 1990s, held in New Delhi from 10 to 14 September 1990,

---

* E/C.7/1991/1.

READEX FICHE

Welcoming the comprehensive documentation presented to the Committee on Natural Resources on integrated water resource development,

1. Recommends that in preparing for the Dublin Conference, every effort should be made to prepare action programmes containing, as appropriate, targets, timetables and cost estimates so as to operationalize the outcome of the Conference to the maximum extent possible;

2. Stresses the need for an action-oriented outcome of the Dublin Conference, which should provide the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development with important contributions with regard to guidelines and time-frames for the establishment of national action plans for integrated water resources development and management;

3. Draws the attention of Governments to the importance of basing national action plans inter alia on the following basic principles:

(a) The concept of water as a finite and fragile resource;

(b) The concept of water as an economic good;

(c) Effective management of water resources at the appropriate administrative levels;

4. Calls upon the governing bodies and secretariats of relevant organizations of the United Nations system to submit, within their respective mandates and in close collaboration with Governments and the secretariats of the Dublin Conference and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, substantive contributions to the Dublin Conference;

5. Invites all Governments to engage actively in the preparatory process leading up to the Dublin Conference and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and to contribute to that process;

6. Calls upon the Inter-Agency Steering Committee established by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination Inter-Secretariat Group for Water Resources for the purpose of preparing for the Dublin Conference to take fully into account all views expressed by Governments throughout the preparatory process when preparing the documentation for the Dublin Conference.

UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/C.7/1991/L.4
3 April 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
Twelfth session
25 March-4 April 1991
Agenda item 13

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS TWELFTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Ioan BARAC (Romania)

Chapter XIII

ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening and duration of the session

1. The Committee on Natural Resources held its twelfth session at United Nations Headquarters from 25 March to 4 April 1991. It held ___ meetings (1st-___ meetings). The session was opened by the Under-Secretary-General for Technical Cooperation for Development.

2. The Under-Secretary-General for Technical Cooperation and the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs addressed the Committee.

B. Membership and attendance

3. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1621 (A) (LI) of 30 July 1971, the Committee is composed of 54 States Members of the United Nations, elected on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Six members from African States, six members from Asian States, and eight members from Western European and other States remain to be elected.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/C.7/1991/L.4/Add.1
3 April 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
Twelfth session
25 March-4 April 1991
Agenda item 13

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS TWELFTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Ioan BARAC (Romania)

Chaper II

ENERGY RESOURCES (Item 3)

1. The Committee considered item 3 of its agenda at its 1st and 2nd meetings on 25 and 26 March 1991. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on trends and salient issues in energy resources (E/C.7/1991/9);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on energy-saving strategies and measures to improve the efficient utilization of electric power systems (E/C.7/1991/12);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on technical cooperation programmes in energy (E/C.7/1991/13).

2. The representative of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development noted the critical importance of energy efficiency measures, especially as regards electricity. In developing countries, physical infrastructure was deteriorating rapidly, mainly due to systematic lack of plant maintenance, as indicated in document E/C.7/1991/12. Systematic maintenance costs should be regarded as an

investment to protect basic equipment so as to guarantee high availability and efficiency and extend the economic life of a plant. While the rehabilitation of a power plant might be technically difficult, case studies showed that the cost per kilowatt of rehabilitated capacity could be one-fourth the cost for the same capacity in a completely new plant and that the implementation time was also significantly shorter.

3. Losses in the transmission and distribution of electric power were often unacceptably high in many developing countries, sometimes accounting for up to one fourth of power generated. While technical losses could be reduced by lowering the resistance and the reactive power flow and increasing the system voltage, cutting non-technical losses raised administrative problems since they often involved accurate computerized billing, damaged meters or the inability of poorer sectors of the population to pay for electricity use.

4. Regional power system interconnections were especially attractive to developing countries since they resulted in lower generation costs, lower reserve capacities and increased supply security. That was especially beneficial when smaller national grids were interconnected. Power system planning, which in general was highly computerized, and training should receive particular attention. Document E/C.7/1991/13 provided an overview of technical cooperation project activities in energy. In 1990, the Department executed 106 energy projects in 40 developing countries with budgets of around $22 million in a wide variety of sub-sectoral areas including energy policy and planning, power plant rehabilitation and modernization, greater energy end-use efficiency and conservation in industry, transport, residential, commercial and rural sectors, modernization of coal mines, and development of new and renewable sources of energy.

5. The report summarized the Department's active programme of international meetings, research, publications and software development in support of technical cooperation activities in energy.

6. The representative of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs noted that document E/C.7/1991/9 offered a broad and long-range perspective on energy demand and suppply and to the policy issues to which they gave rise.

7. The analysis was conducted at the global level, but the energy needs, resources, and prospects of developing countries were given particular attention. Its time horizon extended through approximately the first two decades of the next century. The link between energy and the environment was treated in the report at some length.

8. The composition of gross domestic output would be the most important variable influencing energy intensity, for most countries. Trends in product mix would probably work towards a falling energy intensity of production in the developed country group and a rising intensity in the developing countries. Technological progress would be the second principal factor influencing future energy intensity. Those intangibles would eventually be embodied in more energy-efficient durable goods, if they were to reduce the rate at which energy must be utilized to perform particular tasks. Technological innovation would ultimately become an investment problem.

9. In considering energy intensity and economic efficiency, movement towards higher-energy intensity in a society is not necessarily inconsistent with a movement towards a more economically efficient employment of energy.

10. On the supply side of the energy picture, mankind did not face any absolute physical shortage of energy; it did, however, confront the challenge of transforming an enormous theoretical potential into adequate practical potential. The research underlying the report investigated a large number of specific fuels and energy forms. Most important, fossil fuels and those fuels and renewable energy flows in which the Economic and Social Council expressed a particularly interest in its resolution 1989/6 were accorded separate treatment In each case, the outlook for the energy source's technological maturation and costs of production and the constraints peculiar to it were discussed. Investigation of those factors provided a basis for an appreciation of the practical potential of the energy source and the grounds for a realistic assessment of the prospects for that potential being realized during the next few decades.

11. On the role of public policy, particular attention was paid to the relationship between energy and environmental policy. Achievement of economic efficiency in the production and use of energy was posited as the basic - though not necessarily exclusive - goal of public policy towards energy, and competitive markets were seen as the most frequently employed institutional device to attain that goal. However, in some situations competitive markets did not, even in principle, lead to economically efficient production or use of energy. One example was a situation in which environmental damage occurred incidentally to the production of energy. The aim of policy in such situations was to induce the individual energy enterprise to produce at the socially optimal rate, either through internalization of the environmental costs to the enterprise by taxation or thorugh direct governmental mandates. Thus, environmental policy, at least in its relationship to energy, could be viewed as simply energy policy in which the benefits and costs of energy production and use were seen in a sufficiently broad perspective.

12. With regard to the expansion of energy production capacity in developing countries, the main obstacle to the transformation of energy resources into tangible production capacity was the problem of financing the required investment. Among measures to alleviate it, the most important was the expansion of the cash flows available to individual energy enterprises - both public and private. Steps to improve the efficiency of capital markets in developing countries could also assist in the financing of energy investment as well as aiding across the whole spectrum of developmental finance. Foreign equity participation could play an important role in the same process. International and national development institutions could provide a vital catalytic function in the early exploratory stages of resource exploitation and assist in financing the later development phase.

13. Most delegations welcomed the reports of the Secretary-General and emphasized the importance of energy to the process of economic growth and development in their own countries; several gave brief surveys of the energy-related challenges and opportunities in their countries. Several delegations recalled that energy was chosen for special emphasis at the twelfth session of the Committee in order to

underscore the crucial role it plays in the growth and development of developing countries. Developing countries should anticipate significant growth in energy demand, and technical as well as financial assistance would be needed to meet and restructure future energy consumption.

14. Several representatives raised issues concerning environment and development. While environmental considerations in energy development were increasing in importance, representatives cited the conflict that sometimes arose between environmental goals and development priorities. In addition, present mechanisms were inadequate to address both energy-related environmental degradation and disasters. New modalities would be needed to address those issues.

15. Most delegations stressed the need to utilize energy more efficiently in the future, so as to maximize its contribution to economic growth and development. Several representatives pointed out that the continued use of older and less energy-efficient technologies, particularly in industry, increased costs and limited economic expansion. Those delegations emphasized the need for transfer to developing countries of more energy-efficient technologies and for augmentation of the funds supporting such transfer.

16. Considerable attention and commentary were directed at efficiency and conservation in the electric power sector, with emphasis given to problems in generation, transmission and distribution. Representatives encouraged the establishment of pilot programmes promoting energy efficiency, including rehabilitation, life extension and modernization of power plants. Inadequate maintenance of outdated equipment was noted as leading to high operating costs as well as reduced availability and reliability. Lack of adequate electricity in rural areas was also mentioned as increasing environmental stress through fuelwood dependence. Finally, representatives pointed out that regional power interconnections would improve availability and reliability at lower cost.

17. The question of increasing energy production capacity in developing countries was also addressed by several delegations. With respect to new and renewable sources of energy, one delegation considered that development of small-scall hydropower provided perhaps the most viable prospect. Another emphasized the potential role of natural gas, in view of the magnitude of the reserves and the relatively benign environmental effects of that fuel. Coal-bed methane recovery was cited as a proven technology in developed countries with potential commercial and environmental benefits. Several delegations noted that inadequate exploration and development often resulted in excessive energy imports and that scarcity of financial resources had constrained energy resource development. They recommended that the United Nations system and door countries should assist developing countries, both technically and financially, to exploit and diversify their energy resource base. They stressed the importance of additional funding to assist developing countries to adequately meet environmental impacts arising from energy production, transformation and utilization.

18. One delegation stressed the importance of promoting cooperation betwen energy-producing and energy-consuming countries since net benefits could be derived by both sides. Such international cooperation could ensure long-term stability. In particular, price stability demanded an orderly expansion of production capacity.

19. Several delegations expressed appreciation for United Nations technical cooperation programmes, and recommended that those programmes be fully supported with the technical and financial resources necessary for them to respond to the needs of developing countries. Most saw creation of self-sustaining and lasting capacities in recipient developing countries as the basic approach to technical cooperation. The training of technicians, managers and planners, the establishment of regional energy information centres for technical exchange, and provision of technical advisory services were emphasized by one delegate as specific areas of concentration. Another cited training of national staff in both technical and policy areas as critically important, both at the national and regional levels. One representative called attention to the importance of information systems for energy planning and policy analysis, and recommended that the United Nations enhance its technical cooperation programmes in this area.

20. Statements were made by representatives of the Econonic Commission for Europe, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the International Atomic Eenergy Agency, and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, outlining the activities of their organizations in the field of energy.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/C.7/1991/L.4/Add.2
3 April 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
Twelfth session
25 March-4 April 1991
Agenda item 13

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE AT ITS TWELFTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Ioan BARAC (Romania)

Chapter III

WATER RESOURCES: PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAR DEL PLATA ACTION PLAN (Item 4)

1. The Committee considered item 4 of its agenda at its 3rd and 4th meetings, on 27 March 1991. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on strategies and measures for the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan in the 1990s (E/C.7/1991/8).

2. The representative of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs indicated that the report was the result of extensive work carried out through the ACC Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources. In effect, it was a summary of regional studies carried out on critical issues in the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan, with the financial support of UNDP and the active participation of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development, the regional commissions, WHO, WMO, UNESCO, and UNEP. Issues covered related to water resources assessment, water quality, water for sustainable agricultural development, water resources management, and the need for national capacity-building with regard to institutions and human resources development. On drinking water supply and sanitation, the report summarized the findings and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session on the achievements of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990) (A/45/327); the outcome of the Global

Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation for the 1990s, held in New Delhi in September of 1990, as contained in the New Delhi Statement; and the contents of General Assembly resolution 45/181. While providing recommendations for action concerning each of those issues, the report to the Committee laid emphasis on the need for bringing about an integrated approach to the management of water as a finite and fragile resource.

3. The representative of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development provided the Committee with additional information concerning the background documentation to the report of the Secretary-General. As a result of the regional studies, a report on water resources assessment had been prepared by WMO and UNESCO. Similarly, FAO had prepared reports on water for agriculture and on an international action programme on water and sustainable agricultural development. A report on water quality issues had also been submitted by WHO and UNEP, while the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development, in cooperation with the regional commissions, had presented several reports on planning and management issues. With regard to capacity-building, UNDP had commissioned a consultant report which would be the background document to a symposium on the subject to be held in Delft, the Netherlands, in June 1991. Copies of those documents were provided to the members of the Committee as background documents.

4. The representative of UNDP, on behalf of the Chairman of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, stated that Council's mission was to enhance collaboration among developing countries and external support agencies, and that its goals were as follows: to provide a forum for sector professionals to identify, review and seek consensus on key sector issues, and to ensure wide-spread communication of the results; to alert members to opportunities for more efficient use of resources; to increase awareness of the need for intensified effort to expand sustainable coverage and effective use during the 1990s; to promote and enhance collaboration at the country level; and to stimulate the adoption of more harmonious policies, strategies and programmes. The membership of the Council is open to sector professionals in national sector agencies of developing countries and to external support agencies active in the water supply and sanitation sector. The UNDP representative also gave a brief description of issues related to capacity-building, as contained in the background document on the subject, and of activities of the joint UNDP/World Bank programme on water supply and sanitation and the UNDP's Programme for the Promotion of the Role of Women in Water and Environmental Sanitation Services.

5. The representative of WMO described the process involved in the preparation of the background document on water resources assessment as a result of the regional studies and discussed issues and conclusions arising from those studies. In addition, he provided detailed information on preparations for the International Conference on Water and the Environment, to be held in Dublin, in January 1992, which WMO was convening on behalf of the organizations of the United Nations system as part of the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Similarly, the representative of FAO described the process involved in the preparation of the report on the regional studies on water for agriculture and the international action programme on water and sustainable agricultural development. He also provided information about relevant activities of FAO.

6. The representative of INSTRAW stated that in developing countries women were usually affected primarily by problems arising from shortages of water and land degradation. Consequently, women needed to be increasingly involved in the protection and conservation of water resources and in the provision of water supply and sanitation services. The crucial role of women in various aspects of water supply and sanitation was recognized fully during the Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation for the 1990s, held in New Delhi, and at meetings of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council and the Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation.

7. Representatives of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) provided information on the activities of their respective organizations. The representative of ECLAC drew the attention of the Committee to proposals on fresh-water quality and supply contained in the Tlatelolco Platform on Environment and Development, adopted by the ministers and representatives of the Latin American and Caribbean countries, members of ECLAC that participated at the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

8. During the ensuing discussion, delegations provided information on their national experiences and expressed their appreciation for the comprehensive nature of the analysis and proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report and for the extensive background documentation prepared through the ACC Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources. Some delegations emphasized the importance of the concept of the integrated management of water as a finite and fragile resource and the need for an integrated approach to land and water management. A number of delegations also stressed the need to develop strategies and action plans at the global, national and river-basin levels - and also at the local and community levels - and the need for the participation of all interests concerned - in particular, that of women - in the decision-making process. In dealing with issues of water environment, the need for more comprehensive studies of the geological environment, including the impact of mining and industrial activities on water quality was cited, as these data could provide a more reliable basis for further development planning. Some delegations also emphasized the need to intensify technical cooperation activities and technical cooperation among developing countries.

9. Some delegations expressed support for the International Conference on Water and the Environment, to be held in Dublin in January 1992, affirming the vital importance of water as an economic good and a finite and fragile resource. Some delegations expressed the view that the Conference should aim at developing guidelines and time-frames to enable Governments to formulate action plans for integrated water resources development and management as well as international action programmes. They stressed the need for an action-oriented outcome of the Dublin Conference as contributions to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and urged the active participation of Governments in the preparatory process of that Conference. Delegations called upon the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for the Conference to take fully into account the views expressed by Governments throughout its preparatory process.